

James T. Jeremiah  
Devotional Session: Psalm 37  
September 15, 1981

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's have a word of prayer and then we're going to look at one of the Psalms during these mornings. Our father, we're glad for all who've come to this conference, glad for the safe journeys you've given to all. Thank you father for the fellowship we enjoyed last night and for the message that was a challenge to our hearts. We pray this morning as we open the word of God that we might find encouragement and help as we face the responsibilities of our day. Thank you for these men, their wives, the churches represented, may the spirit of God direct us now, we pray in Jesus name. Amen. I'd like to ask you to open your Bibles to the 37th Psalm, and for these mornings we're going to think about some of the things in this Psalm.

James T. Jeremiah:

During the past several years, many years now, I've been going up and down in the land and visiting many churches. And I guess perhaps during the year I have about somewhere 25 or 30 or more Bible conferences, I have two sons and a son-in-law in the ministry, I've talked to a lot of preachers. And there's one thing that every one of them that I know would have in common that is, that somewhere along the line, they're hurting. We're living in a day when we might as well face up to it. There is and there will be a greater increase of opposition to the truth of God's word. And the 37th Psalm is written by a man who knew something about crises, contention, criticism, and conflict. And as you read that Psalm, you will see a great battle going on between the godly and the ungodly. I tried to find out if I could in the life of David when he wrote the Psalm, but I'm not sure that we have real evidence when it was penned.

James T. Jeremiah:

But one thing is certain. He wrote it when he was an old man for in verse 23, it says, "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." And then he goes on to say in one of these verses that he once was young and now is old and he's not seeing the righteous forsaken. So he is writing out of a lifetime of experience. And one of the questions that comes up in the study of the Psalm is the mystery why the godly suffer and the wicked prosper. Jeremiah, the prophet had that problem. David recorded it again in the 73rd Psalm, when he finally declared in the Psalm that when he went into the house of the Lord, he understood their end. And verse 25, he talks about his experience, "I have been young and now I'm old yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

James T. Jeremiah:

One thing he's saying is, "I've lived a long time and I've never seen God's people forsaken." And that ought to be an encouragement to know that here's a man who lived through many trials, oppositions, all kinds of intrigue and unfaithfulness and so on. Not a perfect man by any means but a man who was nonetheless, a man after God's own heart. Now it's interesting to note that he starts the Psalm off with a negative, not a very bad negative either. If we could be negative in this sense, we'd probably be better off than we are when we're negative in some other senses, "Fret not thyself." That's an interesting phrase, only here in the Psalm verse 7 it uses it again, "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him. Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his evil way."

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And then the last part of verse 8, "Cease from anger, forsake wrath, fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Now the word means to eat away or to know it means to agitate or disturb. It comes from a word which means cause fire to burn or kindling up an anger, or get burned up. Ever been burned up? Ever flipped your lid, blown your stack. Well, this is what the verse says we're not to do. We're to fret not. Fret not for what reason? Well, fret not because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. We can get in the ministry of the gospel, we can sometimes spend a lot of our time fretting over those who seek to do evil to us. And the word of God commands in the scripture that we're not to do that.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now that isn't easy. I'm not saying it's easy. I'm saying that's what we ought not to do. God wants us to look at the problems and not let the problems get the best of us. If you're here this morning and you don't have any problems, you can sleep during this period of time. But if you're here with a problem, it starts out with for me and for you, for all of us, we're not to be burned up, we're not to be chafed and not to let the thing no way at us and ruin us. Why not? Well, essentially in the Psalm, there are two reasons.

James T. Jeremiah:

Reason number one is, the word of God tells us what will happen to the wicked. And there are many references to that. I don't want to take the time to look at all of them. Perhaps you might look at 10 for yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be. And then in verse 20, he mentions it again. "But the wicked shall perish. The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lands." God is saying through this Psalm don't fret, God's going to take care of the opposition of the wicked, of the ungodly, the man or the woman or who else is seeking to oppose the truth. That's the reason number one, what will happen to the wicked.

James T. Jeremiah:

Reason number two, why we shouldn't fret, is because of what is promised to the righteous. Verse 11, "But the meek shall inherit the earth." Ever hear that before or again, for it is in the great passage of scripture that we have on the Sermon on the Mount. The meek shall inherit the earth. And again, you have it in verse 22, "For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth." And verse 29, shall inherit the earth.

James T. Jeremiah:

Through that Psalm, It says that, why should we fret? We're going to have the whole business anyway, going to be ours. You say that, "Well, I don't know if I want the old place." So good anyway you look at it. But what he's talking about so far as I'm concerned is when the Lord gets through cleansing it and we're going to be there in that millennium, that kingdom. So we have two reasons in the Psalm why we shouldn't fret. One is, what God's going to do with the opposition, what he's going to do for us. Fret not. And then he gives some wonderful, positive things for us as believers. First, we are to rely on the Lord, trust in the Lord, do good. And it has the idea of a sense of wellbeing and security which results from having something or someone in whom to place our trust and reliance, rely on the Lord.

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I'm going to suggest that it's the feeling of being safe or secure and that we're to be unconcerned. Number of things involved here; faith, trust in the Lord, the object of our faith. Do good works, never reversed by the way, trust and do good, not do good and trust. Want to start on works program and think it's going to lead you to faith, faith leads to good works, has to do with victory, will dwell in the land. That's the sphere of life. The land has to do with the Christian life and the victory that we can have in Christ in that life. Something about satisfaction, thou shall be fed. Trust in the Lord, rely on the Lord, fret not but rely on the Lord. Then he tells us in verse four to delight ourselves, someone has translated this, find happiness in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

Really the word means to be soft or pliable or to be delicate. In facing the conflicts, we must keep our hearts open to his leading, never becoming callous or filled with retaliation. And it's easy to be filled with retaliation, isn't it. Some dear saints and they're not all wicked ones I guess, do something that hurts you. The easy thing to do is retaliate. Get your fist all fixed up and you'll say, "That rascal haven't seen anything yet." Let's hope he doesn't see it. Rejoice in the Lord. Over in the book of Nehemiah, one of my sons sent me a plaque one day that I've treasured. And that is the joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord is the strength when you live among the ungodly and the opposition. But rejoice in the Lord when all the rest seems to be against you.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, it's easy to preach that, gentlemen and ladies, but it's one thing to practice it. And if we don't fret, then we can rejoice. If we rejoice, we won't fret. We trust the Lord. We will not be fretting. Another one is we ought to release to the Lord. Verse 5, all of our frustrations, if you please. Verse 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Now these are all well-known to you, but I want you to see when you leave this room today and go out in the lobby that somebody knew I was going to preach on this. So they put all these verses and beautiful plaques out there. I didn't know they were there until I got here this morning. Commit thy way, roll the whole burden of life upon the Lord. That means to cast away anxieties, said Spurgeon. Resign thy will, submit thy judgment.

James T. Jeremiah:

Leave all with a God of all. That's a good statement. The word implies a burden too heavy for one to bear. So it's rolled upon the shoulders of another. We have it mentioned again in Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." First Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care or your anxiety on the Lord." The direction we go should be committed to him; our way, the loads we bear, your burdens, the troubles we have, casting our cares on him. One day one of the battles of the revolutionary war, I think Brandywine, they were facing a battle and going out across the bridge. And one of the soldiers said to Washington, "Shall we burn the bridges or should we wait and see if we need them?" And the great commander in chief looked at this soldier and said, "Burn the bridge. It's either victory or death."

James T. Jeremiah:

And we have to burn some bridges, commit our way to the Lord. Roll our way upon the Lord. Rest in the Lord, release our burdens to the Lord, rest in the Lord. Verse 7, it means to be silent to Jehovah without impatient, clamor or presumptuous indifference. Resting is the antidote for fretting. Again, when we rest in him, what happens? Well, when something happens and we think we deserve what we didn't get, then somebody got what we should have. Jealousy will be eliminated when we rest in the Lord. He

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made us what we are. The wicked rich or any of these own people can't interfere with what God has for us. Rest in the Lord. We stop our complaining, we rest in the Lord. He put us where we are. We can rest in him and do the right thing.

James T. Jeremiah:

Criticism will be quieted. It reminds us who we are. Verse 9, we're inheriting the earth as I mentioned. Verse 12, the just is the title of the saints. We're right even called saints in verse 28. Resting will not exalt or play ourselves down either by the way. One of the problems sometimes we have in the ministry, we always say, "Well boy, I don't think I can do it." If God puts you there, you can. God gave you the job to do, you can. You have to play yourself down. You got just as much of God's grace as the apostle Paul. That oughta be enough, hadn't it?

James T. Jeremiah:

Rest in the Lord. Be silent to God without impatient clamor. The last one is relaxing in the Lord, wait. What does that word mean? I was delighted to read about this, learn this about the word. It means allow him time to act instead of attempting to act for him. I need that, do you? Oh, I tell you something. We had some problem in some burden and say, "We're going to solve it. We get up early in the morning." And the trouble is we go to bed late at night with a thing unsolved because we tried to do it. And I don't believe we ought to eliminate dealing with problems. I've known people say, "No, let's not bother it. It'll go away." It does like a whole hut full of rabbits multiplying.

James T. Jeremiah:

We have to deal with the problems, but we can wait on the Lord. That will encourage us to do a lot of things. We won't lag behind His leading and direction, we won't walk ahead of His leading and direction. We won't be indifferent to it, we'll wait on him. Now in closing our little study this morning, I want to go back to that fifth verse. And the reason I want to do it is from a standpoint of a personal testimony. When I was about halfway through course of study at what was then Baptist Bible Seminary, when someone was graduated from that place, he decided that it would be better to change the name.

James T. Jeremiah:

Anyway, it was a great experience with Dr. Bancroft and those teachers in those days, and still is a great experience in that school. But I came halfway through the school training period then. I was about ready to quit. I was filled with doubts and hadn't been for the grace of God, I'm sure I would have walked out on the whole business. I knew enough to know that I had to have something from the Bible if I was going to find something to stay with it. And out of all of that trying experience, God gave me a verse that I've written many times, many places, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, He shall bring it to pass." Last year, I was asked to speak to the basketball team, and I thought of my whole verse. And I began to think about it. "Commit your way unto the Lord trust in him. He'll give you a victory." Oh, and that'd be nice and I could tell the basketball team, just trust the Lord. It's amazing how Christian schools can play Christian schools and everybody is trusting God to win.

James T. Jeremiah:

I heard Lehman Strauss say one day that his son and his wife were expecting a baby. And about two months, a month or so before the baby was born, the son said to Lehman, "I'm praying it will be a boy." He said, "It's too late."

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James T. Jeremiah:

You know what I think that verse means? And I think at least in a little way in my life, I've seen it. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. Bring what to pass? Well, you have to get to verse 6, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noon day. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun." Well, what's that got to do with it. It's found in Matthew 5:14, "Let your light so shine before men that they shall see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven." Friend of mine in the time of opposition and difficulty, and trial, and unbearable burdens, if you're in the will of God and commit your way to Him out of it all, He'll make your testimony to count.

James T. Jeremiah:

And that's what it's all about, really. It's going to cost us something to make it count, we better pay it. It's going to be tough, but isn't it great to know that we have a God who takes care of all the results, keeps the books and does the business that needs to be done in our lives.